

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows.

1-25. (Canceled)

26. (currently amended) A promotion method, comprising the steps of:

presenting , by a point issuing device provided in an automatic vending machine, point information related to points issued for promotion of sale merchandise to a ~~user~~consumer at a time of merchandise sales ~~to the consumer~~ by the automatic vending machine;

transmitting to a center device, by operation by the ~~user~~consumer of a portable terminal carried by the user, the point information presented by the point issuing device in the point information presenting step, together with identification information for the ~~user~~consumer;

receiving at the center device the point information transmitted from the portable terminal of the ~~user~~consumer in the point information transmitting step and the identification information for the ~~user~~consumer;

totaling and managing at the center device points corresponding to the point information received in the receiving step for the ~~user~~consumer identified by the identification information; and,

offering a prescribed service corresponding to the points to the ~~user~~consumer by referring to the points totaled and managed in the totaling and managing step, wherein:

the point information comprises a module code for identifying the point issuing device and a secret code related to the points, and

the point information presenting step comprises the step of encrypting by the point issuing device at least the secret code among the module code and the secret code before presentation to the ~~user~~consumer.

27. (original) The promotion method according to claim 26, wherein the point information presenting step comprises the steps of:

effectively setting a display unit of the point issuing device based on a return signal issued by operation of a return lever of the automatic vending machine;

setting a timer for counting a predetermined time based on the return signal;
displaying on a display unit of the point issuing device the point information based on a money collecting signal for confirming that the sales of merchandises was performed by the automatic vending machine; and
erasing the display of the point information on the display unit of the point issuing device based on when the return signal is reissued by re-operation of the return lever or when the timer times out.

28. (currently amended) The promotion method according to claim 26, wherein the point information presenting step comprises the step of presenting the point information to the ~~user~~ consumer by printing out the point information on a prescribed form from the point issuing device.

29. (currently amended) the promotion method according to claim 26, wherein the point information presenting step comprises the step of presenting the point information to the ~~user~~ consumer by inputting the point information to the portable terminal carried by the user, by means of communication between the point issuing device and the portable terminal.

30. (currently amended) The promotion method according to claim 29, wherein the portable terminal comprises a portable telephone set carried by the ~~user~~ consumer, and input of the point information to the portable terminal is performed using any of wire communication, wireless communication, infrared communication, and audio communication between the point issuing device and the portable telephone set.

31. (currently amended) The promotion method according to ~~any of claims 26-30~~ 26, 27, 28, 29 or 30, wherein the secret code comprises parity information for checking alteration of the point information.

32. (currently amended) The promotion method according to ~~any of claims 26-30~~26, 27, 28, 29, or 30, wherein the secret code comprises at least a point issue number unique to the issued point information, and

the center device judges duplicate use of the point information based on the point issue number.

33. (currently amended) The promotion method according to claim 26, wherein the center device manages a ~~state~~state of at least one of the point issuing device and the automatic vending machine in which the point issuing device is provided, based on the module code.

34. (currently amended) The promotion method according to claim 26, wherein the center device manages a status of use of the system by the ~~user~~consumer based on identification information for the user transmitted from the portable terminal of the user.

35. (currently amended) The promotion method according to claim 26, wherein the center device permits the user to read point information stored and managed for the ~~user~~consumer in response to a request from the user using the portable terminal.

36. (currently amended) A promotion system, comprising:
a point issuing device, provided in an automatic vending machine, to present to a ~~user~~consumer of the system point information related to points issued for promotion of sale of merchandise upon sale of merchandise;
a center device for storing and managing points corresponding to the point information presented by the point issuing device, in correspondence with the ~~consumer~~user;
a portable terminal carried by the ~~consumer~~user for transmitting, by the operation of the portable terminal by the ~~user~~consumer, to the center device the point information presented by the point issuing device, together with identification information for the user;
update means, provided in the center device, for decoding the point information transmitted by the portable terminal, and for updating points which have been stored and

managed for the ~~user~~ consumer based on the points corresponding to the decoded point information; and

service providing means for offering a prescribed service to the ~~user~~ consumer based on the points which have been stored and managed for the ~~user~~ consumer, wherein:

the point information comprises a module code to identify the point issuing device, and a secret code related to the points; and

among the module code and the secret code, the point issuing device encrypts at least the secret code before presenting the point information to the user.

37. (original) The promotion system according to claim 36, wherein the point issuing device comprises:

setting means for effectively setting a display unit of the point issuing device based on a return signal issued by operation of a return lever of the automatic vending machine;

a timer for counting a predetermined time based on the return signal;

display control means for displaying on the display unit of the point issuing device the point information on a condition that a money collecting signal for confirming that the sales of merchandises as performed by the automatic vending machine is issued, after the display unit of the point issuing device has been effectively set by the setting means; and

erase control means for erasing the display of the point information displayed on the display unit of the point issuing device based on when the return signal is reissued by re-operation of the return lever or when the timer times out.

38. (currently amended) The promotion system according to claim 36, wherein the point issuing device presents the point information to the ~~user~~ consumer by means of printing out the point information on a prescribed form by the use of printing means provided in the point issuing device.

39. (original) The promotion system according to claim 36, wherein the point issuing device comprises input means for inputting the point information to the portable terminal through a communication between the point issuing device and the portable

terminal.

40. (currently amended) The promotion system according to claim 39, wherein the portable terminal comprises a portable telephone set carried by the ~~user~~consumer, and the input means inputs the point information to the portable telephone set using any of wire communication, wireless communication, infrared communication, and audio communication.

41. (currently amended) The promotion system according to ~~any of claims 36-40~~36, 37, 38, 39, or 40, wherein the secret code comprises parity information for checking alteration of the point information.

42. (currently amended) The promotion system according to ~~any of claims 36-40~~36, 37, 38, 39, or 40, wherein the secret code comprises at least a point issue number unique to the issued point information, and the center device detects duplicate use of the point information based on the point issue number comprised in the point information.

43. (original) The promotion system according to claim 36, wherein the center device comprises an equipment database to store and manage a state of at least one of the point issuing device and the automatic vending machine in which the point issuing device is provided, in correspondence with the module code.

44. (currently amended) The promotion system according to claim 36, wherein the center device comprises a user database to store and manage circumstances of use of the system by the ~~user~~consumer, in correspondence with the identification information for the ~~user~~consumer transmitted from the portable terminal of the ~~user~~consumer.

45. (currently amended) The promotion system according to claim 36, wherein
the center device comprises accessing means which enables the ~~user~~consumer to access
the point information stored and managed for the ~~user~~consumer, in response to a request made
from the ~~user~~consumer using the portable terminal.

46. (original) The promotion method according to claim 31, wherein
the secret code comprises at least a point issue number unique to the issued point
information, and
the center device judges duplicate use of the point information based on the point issue
number.

47. (original) The promotion system according to claim 41, wherein
the secret code comprises at least a point issue number unique to the issued point
information, and
the center device detects duplicate use of the point information based on the point issue
number comprised in the point information.